LOCAL MEDIEVAL REENACTORS

By Liam Timmins

Locals of Ballinasloe and Aughrim have been kicking back to the medieval ages, participating in historical reenactments and learning cooking, sewing, leatherwork, and other trades from the period.

The Society for Creative Anachronism is an international organization with over 50,000 participants worldwide pursuing recreation of skills developed between 600 to 1600. The national branch is split into three groups: one in the North, one encompassing Dublin and the East, and one for the rest of Ireland covering Galway to Cork.

The Midlands 'Barony of Eplaheimr' group are 50 strong, regularly holding online meetings and monthly face-to-face gatherings. Some events see attendees dress in garb and practicing activities of interest which may include fighting, archery, brewing, dyeing and more. During single day gatherings, everyone in attendance offers a dish to share for a feast, and following the meal the reenactors typically break into singsong.

Weekend events are also provided in locations with accommodation, such as Petersburg Outdoor Education Centre, or sites where attendees can camp. Cost is kept to a minimal to cover the venues of choice.

Edel Chadwick, a lecturer with TUS living in Ballinasloe, has been involved with the SCA since she was based in Australia twenty years ago. Her own enjoyment in medieval reenactment comes from creating fancy clothing, dressing up, and spending: "a weekend away from mundane life".

Another member Ger Clarke, working in Ballinasloe, shows a keen interest in medieval Irish cooking and recently presented a talk to Moore History Group on the craft.

Among Edel's favourite gatherings would be the Valentines 'Court of Love' which typically includes archery competitions, arts and sciences competitions, along with a feast with singing and storytelling.

She is also looking forward to a heavy fighting tourney in November encompassing Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales where men and women will duke out in armour plating with large battle sticks.

Rather than playing a character, 'Adele de Chadwykke' described the masquerading as adopting a persona, ranging from various personalities covering the medieval period.

"Our events are not acting or theatre, we don't have an audience, they are not for profit. We just like to dress up, enter into a different world, leave the screens behind and chat, make stuff, make new friends and just have fun" she explained. Some events not in garb might see them making clothing or leatherwork. Someone is always available to give a hand in the respective trade.

Many events take place in Clara or Moate, but the Midlands group hope to start events in Ballinasloe soon.

'Adele de Chadwykke' and 'Rogned Stengrimova' at the Tíonol Barúnach Eplaheimr event

New members of all ages and orientations are welcome to come along for a taster, although children must attend events with a parent or guardian. Membership options can be found on the society's website at www.SCA.org. For further information regarding the SCA and local group, you can email Edel at Chadwykke@gmail.com.

Ballinasloe and Aughrim Reenactors.
Back (L-R): John Prendergast, Geraldine Clarke, Edel Chadwick, Brian Eccles
Front: Fiona Scerri, Isabelle, Jacqueline Daly, Maya Frost